

PURITANISM AND SOCIETY

had looked, and had caught a glimpse of a world of fealty and chivalry and honour. The monarchy looked, or Laud and Strafford looked for it ; they saw a nation drinking the blessings of material prosperity and spiritual edification from the cornucopia of a sage and paternal monarchy—a nation " fortified and adorned . . . the country rich . . . the Church flourishing . . . trade increased to that degree that we were the exchange of Christendom . . . all foreign merchants looking upon nothing as their own but what they laid up in the warehouses of this Kingdom."¹¹

In a far-off day the craftsman and labourer were to look, and see a band of comrades, where fellowship should be known for life and lack of fellowship for death. For the middle classes of the early seventeenth century, rising but not yet triumphant, that enchanted mirror was Puritanism. What it showed was a picture grave to sternness, yet not untouched with a sober exaltation—an earnest, zealous, godly generation, scorning delights, punctual in labour, constant in prayer, thrifty and thriving, filled with a decent pride in themselves and their calling, assured that strenuous toil is acceptable to Heaven, a people like those Dutch Calvinists whose economic triumphs were as famous as their iron Protestantism—" thinking, sober and patient men, and such as believe that labour and industry is

their duty towards God." ^{J1} Then an air stirred and the glass was dimmed. It was long before any questioned it again.

(ii)

A Godly Discipline versus the Religion of Trade

Puritanism was the schoolmaster of the English* middle classes. It heightened their virtues, sanctified, without eradicating, their convenient vices, and gave them an inexpugnable assurance that, behind virtues and vices alike, stood the majestic and inexorable laws